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ABSTRACT

The inquiry illuminated the way in which specific schooling practices enhanced or negated effects by analyzing data on pupils in different placement groups having Spanish as their first language, with little if any English language proficiency at the time of entering school. If pupils were placed inappropriately low, the end-of-program scores simply reflected prior rather than current learning. Participants were from 35 districts in 4 states (Texas, California, Florida, and Arizona) with substantial Spanish-speaking pupil populations. Collectively, the districts, schools, and classes represented the full diversity in instructional settings that typically serve Spanish-speaking children. All pupils received instruction in classes that entailed use of the English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Pupils, a product system designed for instruction with pupils for whom Spanish is their first language. Data sources were the Placement Aid Record used to select and assign pupils for instruction and the Unit Record sheet used to confirm learning and assign further instruction when needed. A functional relationship between the units completed and the effects obtained was found only for pupils placed at or above recommended levels. It was concluded that some schools chose to accelerate pupils, others to see regular progress, and others to simply maintain proficiencies pupils displayed upon entry. These choices reflected implicit teacher decisions rather than pupil capabilities. (NQA)

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The Implications of Placement Decisions of Spanish Speaking Children

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Paper to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Quebec, Canada, April, 1983

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The Implications of Placement Decisions of Spanish Speaking Children Learning English

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ABSTRACT

The inquiry illuminates the way in which specific schooling practices can enhance or negate effects. If pupils were placed inappropriately low, the end-of-program scores simply reflect prior rather than current learning. Analysis of data on pupils in different placement groups helped clarify this situation. In particular, a functional relationship between the units completed and the effects obtained was found only for pupils placed at or above recommended levels. The final conclusion was simply that some schools chose to accelerate pupils, others to see regular progress, and still others to simply maintain proficiencies pupils displayed upon entry. These choices reflected implicit teacher decisions rather than pupil capabilities.

The Implications of Placement Decisions
of Spanish Speaking Children

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Objectives

The results presented in this study depart dramatically from those typically found. The study shows direct evidence of the positive effects schools have on pupils. The pupils in question are those entering public schools in the United States and having Spanish as their first language, with little if any English language proficiency at the time of entering school. All pupils received instruction in classes that entailed use of a product system. At the end of the school year the pupils demonstrated instructional learning of the English language skills and concepts addressed by the product system. Further, the magnitude of the "effects" are shown to be systematically linked to the practices employed by schools. Pupil placement status is a schooling practice found to be directly linked to other schooling practices and to the eventual learning and instructional status of pupils. Collectively, the findings of the inquiry provide a clear exemplar of the kind of results so often sought but rarely found in studies of schooling or evaluations of educational programs. Of importance in this regard is the fact that the instructional program involved in the inquiry is in the area of bilingual-bicultural education; an area where few effects studies of substantial size, scope, and significance can be found.

Perspectives

The nationwide installation of a comprehensive educational product system, English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Pupils (LCS), during 1973-74 school year, provided the vehicle for this research. As the name indicates, LCS is a product system which has been designed for instruction with a designated population of pupils; those for whom Spanish is their first language. The instruction is intended to teach specific English language skills and concepts using both teacher-directed lessons and student/parent/aid tutorial materials. The product materials also include three kinds of tests to support the instruction: the Placement Aid is used to select and assign pupils for instruction; Unit Assessments are used to confirm learning and assign further instruction when needed; and the Program Assessment is used to describe learning at the end of the school year or after all instruction is complete.

Methods and/or Techniques

The methodology used in this inquiry evolved from efforts at SWRL to find ways to measure and describe schooling effects, identify the schooling procedures and practices that produce such effects, and provide information and systems to improve schooling in general. The methodology developed has been referred to as a form of programmatic R&D. In this method, a large number of pupils, classes, schools, and districts, using the same instructional product systems, provide data using instrumentation components linked to the product system. Although the product system is under full control of school personnel operating under natural conditions, i.e., using it how they choose, with whom they choose, when they choose, they do provide various

kinds of data about the installation, operation and results obtained. This information is generated over the course of the school year as part of normal operations.

Data Source

The procedures employed in the LCS inquiry fulfill the general requirements of programmatic R&D. Operationally the data sources are integrated components of the instructional product system linked together by an information system. The two components that served as data sources for the present study are the Placement Aid Record and the Unit Record sheet. The participants came from 35 districts in four states (Texas, California, Florida, and Arizona) with substantial Spanish-speaking pupil populations. Collectively, the districts, schools, and classes representedthe full diversity in instructional settings that typically serve Spanish-speaking children.

Results

The results of this inquiry are relevant to three educational issues: identifying schooling effects, establishing relationships between schooling practices and effects, and to a methodology for studying the endeavor of schooling. The overall inquiry results, based both on the end-of-program (or year) test and on subsequent instructional assigment show clear evidence for powerful product system effects.

Evidence about the characteristics of the Placemaent Aid and the reasons behind the observed placement data can be obtained by looking at the relationship between units completed and pupil proficiency within various placement status groups. The reasoning behind this kind of analysis is straighforward. If the instruction

is both appropriate and effective for a pupil, the expectation is that there should be a clear relationship between these two variables. That is, pupils receiving more units of instruction should show greater proficiency on the end of year test.

The data presented in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1 show the relationship between unit completion and proficiency on the concept statement outcome for pupils in each of six placement categories. These data show the expected pattern of increasing proficiency as more units are completed for the three cases where pupils were placed either at or above recommended levels. Positive correlations were obtained in each case that range from .30 to .76. Also, the corresponding linear regression lines for these groups show the expected positive slope.

By way of contrast, the data for the three groups where pupils were placed below show little change in proficiency with instructional units completed. The regression lines are more nearly parallel and reflect the low, near zero correlations between the units completed and the test score variable. This situation reflects the fact that pupils who were placed below "top out" on the test in virtually all unit completion categories.

The full inquiry data base also illuminate the way in which specific schooling practices can enhance or negate effects. If pupils were placed inappropriately low, the end-of-program scores simply reflect prior rather than current learning. Analysis of data on pupils in different placement groups helped clarify this situation. In particular, a functional relationship between the

units completed and the effects obtained was found only for pupils placed at or above recommended levels. The final conclusion was simply that some schools chose to accelerate pupils, others to see regular progress, and still others to simply maintain proficiencies pupils displayed upon entry. These choices reflected implicit teacher decisions rather than pupil capabilities.

Table 1

Correlations Between Unit Completed Groups And Average Proficiency on Concept Statement Test for Placement Status Groups

#	Placement Group Actual	Placement Group suggested	No. of Pupils	Unit Completion Categories	Correlation/Regression Statistics R	b	a	$\bar{X}$	$\bar{Y}$
1.	LCS 1	LCS 1	734	9	.38	.096	10.25	6.25	10.85
2.	LCS 9	LCS 1	86	9	.65	.399	10.30	5.28	12.40
3.	LCS 9	LCS 9	262	8	.35	.149	12.41	4.50	13.08
4.	LCS 1	LCS 9	207	10	.08	.011	12.75	6.25	12.82
5.	LCS 1	Reading	42	9	.24	.060	13.01	6.25	13.39
6.	LCS 9	Reading	111	8	-.20	-.021	14.50	5.56	14.38

An issue addressed is whether placement of pupils below occurs with comparable frequency across schools in this inquiry. The data in Table 2 tend not to support this contention. The tabled data report the distribution of the percent of pupils underplaced by school. For purposes of discussion, these data can be broken down into roughly three categories according to the degree of underplacement that took place. In the first group, there are 26 schools in which little or no underplacement took place. In the second group, there are 32 schools where the level of underplacement is 20% or less. In the last group there are 33 schools where

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Figure 1. Mean Concept Statement Score by Units Completed for Placement Groups

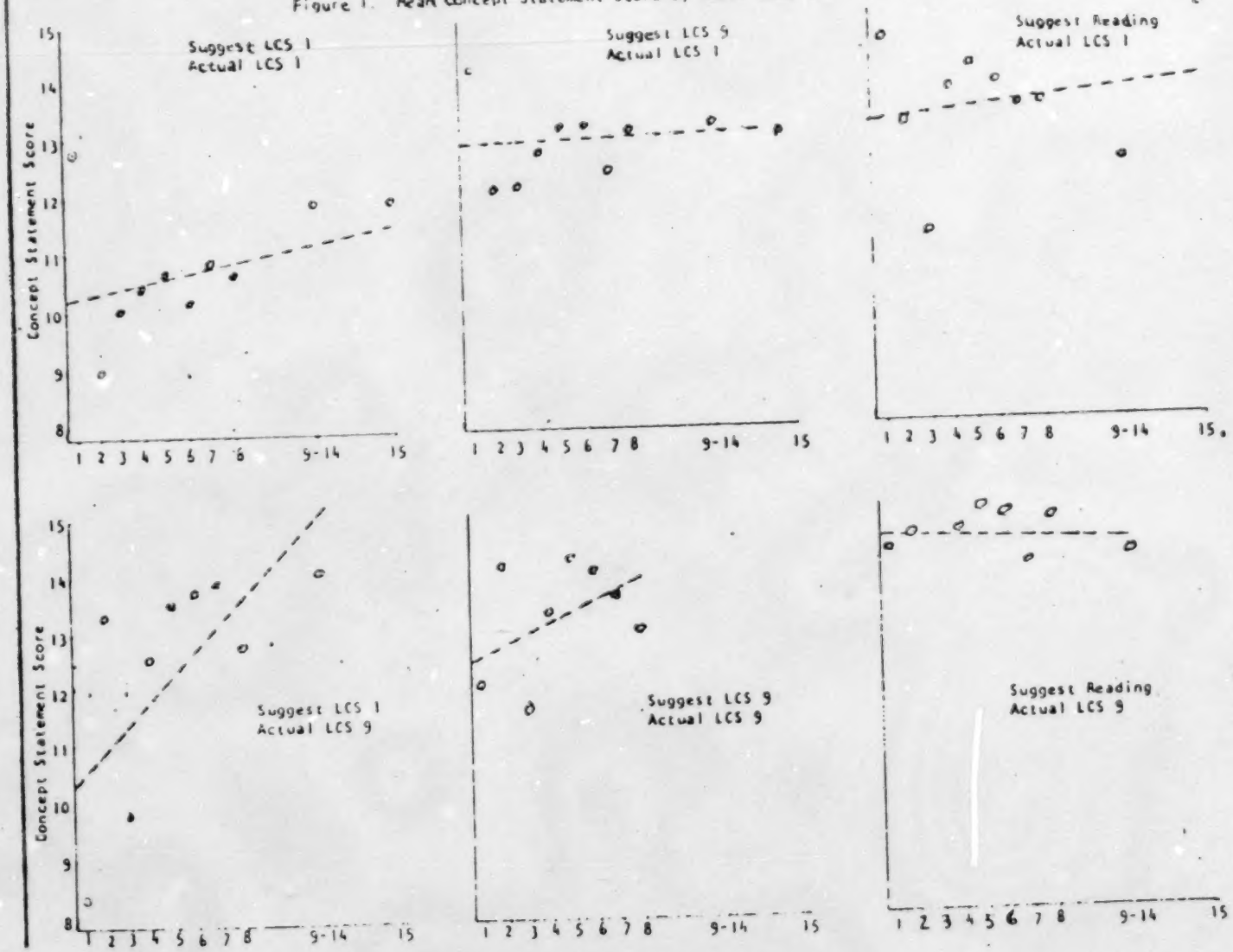

Table 2

Percent of Pupils Placed Below Recommended Levels by Schools (N = 87)

Percent of Pupils Underplaced	Number of Schools	Percent of Total School
0%	26	30
1-20%	32	37
21-40%	12	14
41-60%	10	11
61-80%	4	5
81-100%	4	3

underplacement exceeded 20%. It was this last group of schools that accounts for the substantial overall percentage of pupils placed below the recommended levels.

Educational or Scientific Importance of the Study

More important than the results per se is the evidence that these differences in school practices and effects were detectable using the methodology of programmatic R&D. Such practices have been impossible to observe, let alone detect as regularities, using other methodological orientations. Programmatic R&D methodology provides the capability of detecting schooling practices and effects in a cost effective and widely useful manner. The findings that result from application of the methodology have potential both for improving our understanding of schooling effects and for operationalizing the practices that produce such effects. The second aspect of the methodology provides a direct link between educational R&D and improving the operational effectiveness of schools.